

strong by doing what's right with the Tax Code.

I want to thank you all for coming today to give me a chance to spell out a practical way to make life a more hopeful place for America and small-business owners. Congress needs to act.

Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. in Room 450 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Amy Cofer, homemaker, and her husband, Joe, U.S. Supreme Court police officer; Katie Powers, senior staff accountant, and Shemetra Washington, human resource administrator, New Technology Management, Inc.; Guy Donaldson, fruit grower, Orrtanna, PA; and Rex Hammock, president, Hammock Publishing.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Report Relating to
the Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged
in Illicit Drug Trafficking**

February 19, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the authorities relating to official immunity in the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking, (Public Law 107-108, 22 U.S.C. 2291-4), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20.

**Statement on the Appointment of
William H. Pryor, Jr., To Serve on the
United States Court of Appeals for
the Eleventh Circuit**

February 20, 2004

Today I exercised my constitutional authority to appoint William H. Pryor, Jr., to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Bill Pryor has served as the attorney general of Alabama since 1997 and has had a distinguished career as a public servant and practicing attorney. His impressive record demonstrates his devotion to the rule of law and to treating all people equally under the law. He has received widespread bipartisan support from those who know him and know his record. I am proud to name this leading American lawyer to the appellate bench.

Attorney General Pryor was nominated more than 10 months ago but still has not received an up-or-down vote in the Senate. A bipartisan majority of Senators supports his confirmation. If Attorney General Pryor were given a vote on the floor of the Senate, he would be confirmed. But a minority of Democratic Senators has been using unprecedented obstructionist tactics to prevent him and other qualified nominees from receiving up-or-down votes. Their tactics are inconsistent with the Senate's constitutional responsibility and are hurting our judicial system.

As a result of today's recess appointment, Attorney General Pryor will fill a seat on the Eleventh Circuit that has been designated a judicial emergency. He will perform a valuable service on a court that needs more judges to do its work with the efficiency the American people deserve and expect. Again I call on those in the Senate who are playing politics with the American judicial system to stop so that my nominees receive the up-or-down votes they deserve.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 15

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Daytona Beach, FL, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, at Daytona International Speedway, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Daytona 500 NASCAR race. Prior to the race, the President participated in an interview with Bill Weber of NBC Sports. During the race, he participated in a radio interview with the Motor Racing Network.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Tampa, FL. Later, he had a telephone conversation with NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt, Jr., to congratulate him on winning the Daytona 500.

February 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush participated in a tour of NuAir Manufacturing.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

February 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fort Polk, LA, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Marguerite Nobles.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with National Guardsmen from the 39th Brigade Combat Team. Later, he met with families of soldiers killed in Iraq.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with leaders of the Roman Catholic community.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, following their meeting in the Oval Office.

February 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea to express his appreciation for the Korean National Assembly's approval of the dispatch of additional troops to Iraq.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

In the afternoon, in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President participated in a roundtable discussion with taxpayers.

The President declared a major disaster in Oregon and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms December 26, 2003, through January 14, 2004.

February 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Mark B. McClellan to discuss his intention to nominate Mr. McClellan to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Later in the morning, via computer from the Oval Office, the President started the new printing presses for the Buffalo News.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia to the White House on February 25.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark B. McClellan to be the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul V. Applegarth to be chief executive officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.